

Nor have we any right to demand perfection of conduct and of character, or a thorough training in the ways of the Lord;—the church is the place to promote the one and achieve the other. Nor are we prepared to require any declaration of *certainly* that a hopeful conversion is *real*, or that unmistakably the soul is *in* Christ justified and saved. There are no such ideas as these in the New Testament sketch of the primitive churches. But there is, throughout, the idea of membership which involves credible evidence of the renewal of the heart—of living faith in Christ—and of a course of life beginning the gospel.

It follows, however, that we are not to be surprised or stumbled if some who have seemed to run well and who were properly admitted into the Church, nevertheless fall back and dishonour their profession. When individuals thus fall or wander from their holy profession, it is by no means to be regarded as a proof that they ought *not* to have been received into the Church originally; it is on the contrary only an evidence of the deceitfulness of the heart and of the need, in the Church, of a godly discipline. The apostle in writing to the Corinthians concerning the incestuous man found in their fellowship, does not at all complain of them for having originally received him into their communion; he finds fault with them only *for retaining him there while walking in sin*. When the Apostle John declares concerning some, "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," he gives no hint of wrong doing in their original introduction to the Church; he does not say "ye ought to have judged better and to have refused them." Unless we mistake there is a tendency in our minds to this extreme; being disappointed in some of whom we hoped well, we are tempted to keep out of the Church those who as babes in Christ ought to be cordially received. The true attitude of every Church is one of attraction rather than of repulsion. Its proper business is to allure back the wanderer, and in imitation of its divine master "to draw with cords of a man with bands of love." It must most carefully avoid rearing up a barrier in the path of the humble, contrite soul; its message is "come with us and we will do you good for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Giving full weight to these views, we return to the point of a sound scriptural communion. This, it is repeated, is of unspeakable moment in every point of view. Three ele-